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ABSTRACT

The institutional effectiveness movement has emerged on the higher education agenda because of increased global competition, decreased funding levels, and a loss of public confidence in higher education. While the movement's emphasis on outcomes-based accountability has been integrated into state mandates, accreditation processes, and educational association agenda, colleges have been only minimally successful in integrating assessment into their organizational cultures. In addition, data is still being used to focus on the negative rather than to provide feedback and efforts to tie assessment to funding have been generally unsuccessful. To achieve institutional effectiveness, institutions of higher education must focus on the following efforts: (1) develop more partnerships and utilize the collective resources of higher education; (2) improve communications with elected officials and policy makers; (3) involve faculty as partners in this process; and (4) address academic integrity and collective responsibility step by step. Since 1986, Midlands Technical College, in South Carolina, has been committed to the process of institutional effectiveness. Efforts at the college have included the development of a planning and management model that focuses on the evaluation of mission attainment, the adoption of critical success factors, the identification of 19 indicators of effectiveness, the development of standards and benchmarks to measure progress, and the use of a "report card" to keep trustees and the community informed of progress. (TGI)

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# Using Indicators of Effectiveness To Demonstrate Accountability of Community Colleges

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**Texas Association of**
**Community College Trustees and**
**Administrators**
**October 30, 1995**
**Using Indicators of Effectiveness to Demonstrate**
**Accountability of Community Colleges**

Good afternoon to the Texas Association of Community College Trustees and Administrators. I was honored in 1991 to receive my first invitation to address the leadership of one of America's largest and most respected community college systems. The myths about Texas community colleges are legendary. It is my understanding that they were initiated by retired great, Jess Parrish and perpetuated by North Carolina interloper, David Daniels. Many of us in more centrally controlled states actually believe these stories and envy your resources and local autonomy.

During my 1991 visit with your association, I addressed the topic--***Institutional Effectiveness: A Strategy for Institutional Renewal***. I attempted to make the following points:

1. Accountability is a trend, not a fad.
2. Assessment of results are compatible with our mission.
3. Institutional Effectiveness provides community colleges an exceptional opportunity to demonstrate value.
4. Institutional Effectiveness can be a valuable strategy in reviewing the organizational vitality of our colleges.

While I am never satisfied with my public presentations, I felt better about my 1991 speech than some. That is, until Trustee J.D. Hall offered his reaction. This lay minister, educator, business man and Board Member of Dallas County Community College totally upstaged the main speaker--much to my delight. He shared with presidents and trustees six rules to get the job done:

1. Everybody that is talking about Heaven is not going there.
2. Do it the hard way, it is easier.
3. Avoid making the wrong mistakes.

4. No two identical parts are alike.

5. The trouble with facts is that there are too many of them.

6. The problem is not a failure, but feedback.

Therefore, if past is prologue, I will merely serve as the warm- up act for today's outstanding panel of reactors.

What a nice honor to be invited back for a return visit! However, Dr. Roueche, in his invitation, gave some specific instructions. He encouraged me to give you an update on the topic of Institutional Effectiveness and to provide you with some specific examples of the procedures being used by one college to translate the theory of Institutional Effectiveness into practice. Therefore, I have provided, for each of you, the same set of materials given to our Board of Trustees at our annual August 12, 1995 Planning Retreat and later shared by mail with our Legislative Delegations and County Councils. Before sharing with you the application of Institutional Effectiveness at Midlands Technical College, let me pose and answer three questions:

1. Why did we begin this journey in the first place?

2. Where are we in 1995?

3. Where do we go from here?

**I. Why did we begin this journey in the first place?**

A. <u>Not because we volunteered</u>!

(Note: "We" is used generically of all of higher education.) Many community colleges have been more productive than our senior colleges in addressing accountability; nevertheless, the public views us as one system. Higher Education has had more than 350 years since the founding of Harvard University to initiate outcomes-based evaluation of higher education. Prior to 1985, there were few examples -- Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

is one of a handful.

B. Because we did not begin earlier.

The accountability movement emerged on the national higher education agenda in the early 1980s because we had not addressed it in the 1970s, 1960s, etc. Many in higher education have sincerely argued that you cannot measure in precise terms the outcome of higher education. Some in this audience will share this view. Perhaps all of us agree that it is difficult in many areas, subjective in all areas, and nearly impossible to validate. Because it is difficult is no excuse not to try.

Many of you will recall the intense debate in the Commission on Colleges in 1984 when the Criteria was introduced. Many private liberal arts colleges resisted all references to outcome based measures. We tabled the discussion and returned in 1985 with the euphemism "Institutional Effectiveness".

C. Because everyone else is doing it.

Governmental and corporate leaders argue that if American industry can re-engineer itself into a competitive position and governmental agencies can restructure to address current economic realities, why not higher education? The following report from June 1994 Wingspread Conference in Racine, Wisconsin reflects the

attitude of many public policy makers:

> *"Legislators and board members who press for accountability are from work places that have been radically and painfully reformed. They embrace the notion of continuous improvement. Why not higher education?"*
>
> (Change, Nov/Dec 1994)

D. Loss of confidence in higher education.

Because of high profile examples of mismanagement of higher education and growing criticism about the academic competence of college graduates, the confidence level of the American public, especially those in positions of influence has declined.

Three examples:

1. B. Franklin Skinner, President of Southern Bell, in 1989 addressed the Commission on Colleges on the topic "Two Cheers for Higher Education". He said corporate America is withholding the third cheer because higher education is not producing graduates with the educational competence to compete in a global marketplace.
2. Data from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) reveals that the problems related to funding are more an issue of priority (confidence) than availability of resources. During the past ten years state budgets have been tight, but resources have been made available to address priority issues.
3. A summary report on the 1994 Wingspread Conference says, "The academy is the nations last redoubt (a place of refuge or defense) of provider-driven thinking. Our citizens think we are self absorbed, oriented toward professional gain and don't listen well enough to the paying public we are supposed to serve." (Change,

Nov/Dec 1994)

E. The new emphasis on return on investment.

We previously received priority funding because we were higher education. Now we have to demonstrate that funding for higher education will bring return on investment to the state.

## II. Where are we in 1995?

Enough about history. Whatever spin we put on it, accountability and institutional effectiveness are "front burner" issues for most colleges in 1995. Demonstrating accountability for mission attainment appears to be a trend, not a fad. What then, is the status of this emerging issue in 1995?

A. Accountability/Institutional Effectiveness has been integrated into the national higher education agenda.

1. Summit Conference on Education at University of Virginia in 1989, attended by 49 governors, added higher education to the accountability agenda. The conference was designed to address public education, but one full session focused on concerns about higher education.

2. Most states have accountability mandates.

- Ted Marchese, Vice President of the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) reports that in 1985 five states had assessment mandates; by 1990 forty states had mandates. (Speech to Southern Association of Institutional Research, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, October 10, 1990)
- All 33 states responding to an American College Testing survey said assessment of higher education is a priority in their state.
- Many states would like to tie assessment to funding.

B. Incorporated into the accreditation process. All six regional accrediting bodies now incorporate outcome measures in their Criteria for accreditation.

C. Several educational associations have become proactive in responding to demands for accountability.

1. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the American Association of Community Colleges and the National Association of Universities and Land Grant Colleges have developed a joint Commission to address accountability.

*"Accountability reporting is the right thing to do. The credibility of the higher education community is suffering because of the lack of consistent, comparable information available to government policy makers and the public."*

*(Draft of Joint Commission on Accountability; Letter from Kenneth Mortemer, May 8, 1995)*

2. The Southern Regional Education Board's research of its 13 state regions, identified the following educational policy issues:

- Accountability
- Costs
- Locus of decision making
- Equity
- Assessment
- School-to-Work

Rob Stoltz, SREB
Presentation to Legislative Study Committee, 8/28/95

3. The AACC has adopted a policy statement on institutional effectiveness, established by a Research Commission and published a "national model" - *Core Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness.*

D. Colleges are at various levels of participation. An American College Testing national survey of 452 colleges and universities found that:

- 25% have not begun
- 43% are in the initial planning and start-up
- 25% are in implementation stage
- 6% are in the acceptance/utilization stage

(ACT Report, Joe Steel, June 1995)

E. Trustees are becoming involved.

*"Trustees need to take a more active responsibility for the performance of the institutions they are expected to govern".*

*Policy Perspectives*
*Pew Higher Education Roundtable*
*July 1995*

F. We have many unresolved issues:

1. Minimalist response.

The American Council on Education conducted a national survey which found that 90% of colleges are "doing something" on assessment. However, only one-third have integrated assessment into the culture of the college/university.

*Assessing Assessment*, American Council on Education, Report #79
May 1991

As Mr. Hall said, "Every body talking about heaven isn't going there."

2. Chairs of SACS evaluation team report that most colleges are doing just enough to meet the requirements of Section III of the Criteria.

3. Many, perhaps most, faculty are not "believers". Dr. Roger Peters, faculty member at Fort Lewis College in Colorado, spoke for many faculty when he said:

*"At my institution and those I've visited, assessment hasn't gotten more than ten percent of faculty to change anything but toner*

*cartridges. We still haven't faced the conflict between the public's legitimate demands for convincing demonstrations of the value of college and faculties' professional expertise."*

*(Change, Nov/Dec 1994)*

4. Data is being misused.
   a. Mr. J.D. Hall said, *"The problem is not failure, but feedback."*
   b. Many legislatures have focused on the negative.
   c. *"If data can be misused, it will be."*
5. Inability to tie assessment to funding.
   a. New Jersey has dropped the practice.
   b. Tennessee has mixed results.
   c. Texas cannot figure out how to do it. In the Nov/Dec 1994 edition of Change, Dr. Ken Ashworth reports on the effort of the Texas Legislature to incorporate the assessment of results into the funding formula for public colleges and universities. The plan was to set aside from 5 to 10% of each college's budget to be "earned back" based on performance on 60 standards. The principle problem encountered was the inability to tie performance based funding to the diversity of Texas colleges and universities. According to Ashworth, "Murphy's Law says that anything developed to please everyone is guaranteed to be objectionable to someone."

      In the end, proponents of performance- based funding lost their position of power in 1993 and the institutions prevailed with their argument for retaining the existing process for appropriating funds.

**III. Where do we go from here?**

A. Forward - there is no retreat on this issue.

*"We need to refashion self-regulation for the long hall, not just ride out the current storm."* (Ewell, Change, Nov/Dec 1994)

B. Develop more partnerships and utilize the collective resources of higher education.

C. Improve communications with elected officials and policy makers.

> *"To date the academy's response has followed a predictable pattern. Externally it is characterized by high toned rhetorical protest and behind the scenes no-holds-barred political counterattack. Its chief feature, in turn, is diagnosis of the problem as short term residing less in the realm of performance than public relations".* (Ewell, Change, Nov/Dec 1994)

D. Involve faculty as partners in this process.

Peters concludes, *"Accountability as currently conceived cannot win the approval of widespread faculty support because it usurps our professional responsibility to teach and how to evaluate."* (Change, Nov/Dec 1994)

E. Start where you are!

We have been discussing national issues and trends about which individual presidents and trustees can do very little. But, what we can do is begin where we are. A long journey begins with a single step.

Ewell says two core concepts need to be addressed -- academic integrity and collective responsibility.

1. Agree on a core body of skills that college students should possess.
2. Agree among colleagues on a process of self regulation.

The bottom line:

*"The essential task of self-regulation is to help render what we actually do in our institutions consistent with what we have historically said we believe in."* (Change, Nov/Dec 1994)

**IV. One college's journey toward institutional effectiveness.**

At this point I want to talk to you about what one college and one board of trustees elected to do in the context of this national debate about the effectiveness of higher education. As I stated in the introduction, I provide you the materials at your place and offer you our example at John's request. I normally hesitate to offer personal examples because:

1. We make no claim to perfection.
2. We have many unresolved issues; we have not arrived! We are committed to institutional effectiveness and have moved to the implementation level, but not without problems.
3. Many of you have institutional effectiveness programs that may be better that ours.
4. I am not suggesting that you adopt our model.

Nevertheless, Dr. Roueche seems to be impressed with our consistent and organized commitment to the process since 1986.

A. Midlands Technical College made a commitment in 1986 in preparation for self-study. The Criteria were optional. The college chose to use the planning/evaluation focus of the Criteria.

B. Under a new President, Midlands Technical College used self-study as an opportunity to develop a strategic vision and plan for the college. (Show audience copy of Vision for Excellence)

C. The college developed a planning/management model that focused on the evaluation of mission attainment.

D. The college adopted Critical Success Factors -- "things that must go right if the college is to prosper and achieve its mission". Since the college could not measure everything, it elected to measure those factors most critical to mission.

E. The college identified 37 indicators of effectiveness which have been reduced to 19.

F. The college developed standards/benchmarks against which to measure

progress.

G. The college developed a Report Card to keep trustees and the community informed on progress.

H. Review materials:

1. Strategic Plan
2. Report Card
3. Report on three years of progress

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